AT THE FEET OF THE MASTER TEACHER

by W. P. HIERONYMUS

"He Opened His Mouth and Taught"

A Perry Picture

Christ Teaching From a Boat

From a painting by Hoffman

AT THE FEET OF THE MASTER TEACHER

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The Teacher's Beatitudes *

Blessed are you teachers: for you have found your work.

Blessed are you teachers: for you are freed from the temptation to put your trust in money.

Blessed are you teachers: for yours is the kingdom of children.

Blessed are you teachers: for your associates are among the world's best.

Blessed are you teachers: for your work is constantly realizing your selfhood.

Blessed are you teachers: for you may "allure to brighter worlds" of truth and live and "lead the way."

Blessed are you teachers: for you have kinship with the great sharing souls of all mankind.

Blessed indeed are you teachers: for you have an Elder Brother who is the Great Teacher, even of the whole world.

* Horne, Herman Harrell, *The Essentials of Leadership* (Nashville, Cokesbury, 1931), p. 77.

HOW THE CLASS BECAME INTERESTED

I couldn't get to first base with my Bible class. At first I blamed the class; then I blamed myself.

We were to study the Sermon on the Mount, but I could not get the class interested in it.

I decided to read the Sermon through from beginning to end at one sitting. The first thing that struck me was that Jesus did not preach a sermon. I read: "He opened his mouth and *taught.*" On that occasion Jesus was not a preacher but a *teacher.*

I noticed another thing: Jesus mentioned a lot of objects and activities. Having read the sermon, I went back and counted the objects and activities, and found more than a hundred. Here are some of them:

Body, head, hair, face, cheek, eyes, hand, foot; house, closet, door, candle, oven, fire, pearls; grass, lilies, tree, fruit, grapes, figs; rock, stone, sand, sun, winds, rain, floods; sow and reap, spin, walk, eat, drink.

As you notice, all these objects and activities were taken from everyday life; they were familiar to all who listened to Jesus that day.

Now, why did Jesus mention all these things? Bear in mind that He "opened his mouth and *taught.*" There were certain great truths which He wished to teach the people, and most of them were common, ordinary people. If He had spoken about these great truths in a direct manner, very few would have understood Him. They would have listened for a few minutes and then said: "Let's go home; we don't understand what He is driving at. He is talking highbrow stuff."

But when He mentioned things they saw and did every day, they listened, and when He tried to make clear a truth by the use of illustrations from every-day life, they understood, at least to some extent, what He was driving at. He led their thoughts from what the people knew, to what they did not know at all or did not know very well.

When Jesus closed His talk, we read: "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished

at his doctrines." In other words: they thought He was a great teacher.

What about my Bible class? We went through the Sermon on the Mount to see how Jesus taught. It was a revelation to the class. After that, every member of the class took a great deal of interest in what we studied.

One Sunday forenoon I visited Dr. W. P. Hieronymus' Teachers Training Class in First Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, S. D. It was inspiring to see about 40 young men and women listening eagerly to the leader and taking such active part in the discussion. Later I asked Dr. Hieronymus, if he knew of some books on Jesus as teacher. He mentioned some. Then I blurted out: "Why don't you write a book, too, for *our* Sunday school teachers?" He did; here's the book.

I cannot say how sorry I am that I did not earlier discover Jesus as teacher, and that I had not sat at His feet. I would have been a better teacher, and I would have been a greater help to my teachers. I am very happy, indeed, to have a part in publishing this book.

N. N. RØNNING.

PREFACE

We moderns often think we have progressed a great deal in our principles and methods of education—and we *have*, when we consider the real advances which have been made in recent decades. It is passing strange, however, that so very little is said in our modern educational textbooks about the principles and methods of the Greatest Teacher who has ever lived. It is doubtless because little is known of Jesus as a *Teacher*. Not so long ago a life of Christ was published under the caption *The Man Nobody Knows*. We have heard a great deal also in recent years in political circles about the "forgotten man." It would appear that Jesus is "the Man nobody knows" and the "forgotten Man" in the educational world.

The teaching of some of the world's greatest educational leaders who lived a generation or more ago is antiquated today. Jesus' manner of teaching, however, is not in the least behind the times, despite the fact that He lived almost two thousand years ago. As teachers our problem is not that of sloughing off or improving upon His "outmoded" methods. Since Jesus is miles ahead of us, ours is rather the fascinating problem of trying to catch up with Him. No one has ever done so. It would be wise, however, if we attempted it.

We firmly believe, therefore, that He is the Master Teacher, the Peerless One—the only Perfect Teacher ever to grace this earth. If this be

the case, then it would behoove every right-minded teacher, especially every teacher of religion, to try to catch the spirit and to learn from the methods of the Master. To do so, we are convinced, would bring our teaching to life and endow it with greater effectiveness.

The writer of this little booklet does not claim to have presented a perfect portrait of the Master Teacher. That would be presumptuous. He has not even attempted to state in any comprehensive manner *what* Jesus taught. His doctrines have already been dealt with at length by numerous other writers. Only such teachings of the Master have been introduced into this treatise as were necessary to reveal some of His marvelous *traits* as Teacher.

It would be presumptuous, also, to claim that, in the scope of this booklet, the writer has thoroughly or exhaustively treated the points he makes. He realizes that, at best, he has made only a feeble attempt. In fact, human mind and pen are inadequate for such a task no matter how much time and space be devoted to it. Yet he entertains the fond hope, and the prayer, that this booklet may be helpful in some degree to our teachers of Christianity, particularly our Sunday school teachers. If they receive a few practical suggestions and, perhaps, also a greater vision of the glory of their work as they contemplate some of the traits of the Master, the writer shall be eminently repaid for his efforts. He suggests that a diligent and prayerful study of the four

Gospels, from the viewpoint, not only of learning Jesus' doctrines, but also of endeavoring to ascertain His principles and methods of teaching, will bring even better results.

The author has taught Sunday school classes for many years. During the past seven years he has been in charge of the Sunday School Teacher Training class of First Lutheran Church of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Dr. H. J. Glenn pastor. This school has an enrollment of over 900 pupils. Approximately forty picked young men and women have been attending these classes on the average each year. The course covers two years. Most, if not all, of the graduates have become Sunday school teachers in the local congregation or elsewhere. The writer has received much inspiration and pleasure from teaching these splendid boys and girls. Much of what is written in the following pages is the result of his experience with this class.

Grateful acknowledgement is due for helpful suggestions which have been received from a number of sources, especially from the following books: *Jesus as Teacher*, by Henry Burton Sharman, Ph.D., Harper and Brothers, 1935; *Christ and Modern Education*, by Charles E. Raven, D.D., Henry Holt and Company, 1928; *The Pedagogy of Jesus in the Twilight of Today*, by Walter Albion Squires, B.D., George H. Doran Company, 1927; *Jesus the Master Teacher*, by Herman Harrell Horn, Ph.D., Association Press, 1920; *The Art of Jesus as a Teacher*, by Charles Francis

McKoy, Ph.D., The Judson Press, 1930. The two last-named books have proved to be most helpful.

The material in this booklet has appeared in a series of articles in *The Church School Teacher* published by the Augustana Synod. The writer wishes to express his thanks to the Rev. J. V. Nordgren, editor of this periodical, for permission to reprint it in a thoroughly revised and extended form. He owes a special debt of gratitude to Mr. N. N. Rönning, editor of *The Friend*, for giving it wider circulation in his magazine and also for undertaking the larger task of printing it in book form.

And so we send forth this little book asking God to bless our very imperfect endeavor.

W. P. H.

Sioux Falls, South Dakota, 1937.

Chapter I

Was Jesus a Teacher?

DARKNESS has fallen over the city of Jerusalem. Only a few men are stirring in the deserted streets. One of these shows by his bearing and clothing that he belongs to the upper classes of the people. He is, in fact, a learned Pharisee, a ruler and teacher of the Jews. He does not seem to want anyone to meet him. As he nears the house which he has been seeking, he appears especially careful that no one should see him enter.

Nicodemus—for this is the Pharisee's name—had heard a great deal about a certain Jesus of Nazareth who had recently come to Jerusalem and had attracted a great deal of attention by driving from the temple the money changers and those who sold animals. His straight-forward teaching and the miracles He was performing had also caused the people to marvel. Nicodemus, therefore, wants to find out more about this new Leader. While he is a splendid man in many respects, Nicodemus is apparently afraid to be seen talking to Jesus in broad daylight.

Finally, he arrives at Jesus' lodging place and knocks at the door. Jesus is probably tired from his day's hard work—perhaps He had already retired for the night; but, in spite of this, He gra-

ciously welcomes his distinguished visitor and makes him feel at ease. Notice the words with which Nicodemus opens the conversation. He says: "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God . . . ."

Here we have a proud ruler of the Jews, himself a teacher, addressing Jesus as "teacher," for that is what the word "Rabbi" means, namely, "my master" in the sense of "my teacher."

Jesus' disciples, moreover, and also the people usually addressed Him in this manner. He even welcomed the title of "teacher" as we see from the following quotation, "Ye call me Teacher and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am" (John 13:13, R. V.). Even the Lord's enemies used the title in speaking to Him. On the first Easter morning Mary addressed the Savior beside the empty tomb with "Rabboni," another form of Rabbi which represents the highest Jewish title of honor for teachers of the law.

Yes, Jesus was not only the Redeemer, the Worker of Miracles, and the Great Preacher, but He was very much a teacher. We believe we are safe in saying that the activity of teaching is ascribed to Him in the New Testament more than that of preaching. Even Jesus' preaching was essentially teaching. The Sermon on the Mount is the longest of his formal discourses on record. In introducing this sermon Matthew says, "He opened His mouth and taught them, saying, . . ." Luke, moreover, divides all of Jesus' activities recorded in his Gospel into His works

(doing) and teaching: "The former treatise have I made . . . of all that Jesus began both to *do* and *teach*." In fact, the Gospels contain very many references to Jesus' activity in teaching in the temple, in the city streets, in the synagogues, by the sea, in the wilderness, on the mountainside, and along the highways. He taught whenever and wherever the opportunity presented itself. Jesus' work of teaching must, therefore, have had a tremendously important place in His ministry. From the evidence we are warranted in concluding that it must have been His chief method of labor.

Granted that He was much engaged in the work of teaching, can we say that He was a successful teacher? Let us see. We learn from the Gospels that the people literally flocked to Him. Large multitudes followed Him for great distances up into the hills and mountains and even into the wilderness to hear Him. They said of Him that "He taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes." His teaching was so effective that, with breathless interest and attention, the people "hung on His words, listening." Some, like Mary, forgot their ordinary work and kept sitting at His feet to listen to His gracious words of Wisdom. Even the rough officers of the law who were sent to arrest Him returned empty handed and reported to the indignant chief priests and Pharisees, "Never man spake like this man!" What eloquent testimony!

Did Jesus' teaching, however, bear definite results? Only a few instances must suffice. Early in the fourth Gospel we are told of two of John's disciples that they "heard him speak and they followed Jesus." The following day each one of them hurried to find his brother so that he, too, might be brought to the Master. Jesus apparently had little difficulty in inducing the tax collector, Matthew, promptly to leave his profitable business to become His disciple. As we know, this disciple later wrote the first Gospel in the New Testament. Another tax gatherer, after climbing down from a sycamore tree and receiving the Lord into his house, became an honest and generous man. Thus also certain fishermen were easily induced to abandon their boats and nets in order to become "fishers of men." He was successful not only among the simple folk but also among learned leaders. The sinful woman of Samaria with multitudes of her townsmen as well as the scholar Nicodemus, among others, finally learned to yield themselves fully to the Master.

A teacher's success is also legitimately measured by the success of his pupils. When we look at His disciples we see that He actually did not call "the high and the mighty" to become His helpers. They were unlearned fishermen and peasants for the most part—unpromising material in the eyes of men. Surely, moderns would hardly have picked them as candidates for Phi Beta Kappa honors. Although the information

concerning them is meager, we shall mention a few of the outstanding disciples. There is Matthew, the publican, who, according to tradition, labored successfully in Parthia and Ethiopia and who wrote the first Gospel. John, the beloved apostle, a fisherman by trade, wrote not only the Gospel, which bears his name, but also three epistles and the book of Revelation. He is said to have gathered many disciples in and around Ephesus. Peter was also a lowly fisherman. Think of his success on the day of Pentecost when three thousand, convicted and convinced by his teaching, "gladly received his word" and were added unto the Church. The fanatical Saul, however, was a learned Pharisee. Chosen after Christ's ascension and "spiritually" instructed, he later became the zealous Paul who won many converts and founded numerous, flourishing congregations throughout the Mediterranean world in spite of much opposition and persecution.

Yes, Jesus' handful of apostles with their teaching literally "turned the world upside down." It took only about three centuries for His followers to conquer the proud Roman Empire. And today His disciples have indeed become a mighty army who are faithfully and effectively teaching the children of men even to the uttermost parts of the earth. Little wonder, then, that Jesus has ever been looked upon as the Great Teacher. He is, in truth, the Incomparable One, the Master Teacher of all the ages.

All teachers of the Christian religion have the

distinct honor of following directly in the footsteps of their beloved Master. Of course, every sincere Christian, no matter what kind of occupation he is engaged in, endeavors to walk in His footsteps. He wants Jesus to serve as his Model, his Guide, through life. But the Christian teacher has the satisfaction of knowing that he is following the Lord in a special sense; he may know that he is doing the very sublime work which his Master was doing while here upon earth, namely, that of teaching, revealing God's will to the children of men. The Christian teacher is truly a co-laborer of his Lord.

If Jesus is the Master Teacher, there must be some reason for it. Undoubtedly, He had certain traits, principles, and methods which made Him so successful. If we can discover these, perhaps we teachers of religion may also greatly improve our work and become more successful in our God-given task.

Although Jesus left no writings of his own and the New Testament does not specifically outline all of the characteristics, principles, and methods upon which the Great Teacher based His teaching activities, yet we believe that the most important ones may readily be discovered by a somewhat careful study of His words and His work, as these are recorded in the Gospels.

Moreover, we are of the firm conviction that all teaching, if it is to be genuine, must be imbued with the spirit and should follow the principles and methods of the Greatest of all teachers.

If we follow the Light, we shall not walk in darkness. Shall not we teachers then, like Mary of old, sit at the feet of our Master and learn from Him some of the things that are necessary for those who would carry forward the great work He has entrusted to them?

As we observe the Master at work, we shall notice that He was supreme in at least five important points which have been made the headings of the following chapters. We shall see His beautiful relation to His pupils, His thorough knowledge of His subject matter, His marvelous methods of teaching, His dynamic personality, and His definite and lofty aim. Let us look at these points somewhat closely. Perhaps we may catch a little inspiration and find something that will help us grow into more effective instruments in the hands of our blessed Lord.

Chapter II

His Beautiful Relation To His Pupils

ONE of the first things that strikes us, in studying the teaching activities of Jesus, is this that His relation to His pupils was intimate and beautiful.

For one thing, He knew His pupils thoroughly. He needed not that anyone should testify to Him of man, "for He knew what was in man." He understood man's strengths and weaknesses. He knew man's thoughts, the very motives of his heart. He immediately was able to pierce through the veil of hypocrisy and discover the deceit and trickery of the hostile scribes and Pharisees as well as to recognize the sincerity of the honest seekers after truth.

We realize, of course, that, as the very Son of God, He was in possession of every divine attribute and was thus also omniscient; but in the days of His flesh, during the period of His humiliation on earth, when these attributes were voluntarily laid aside, His thorough knowledge of man must have been to a large extent the result of making human nature in general and His pupils in particular the objects of careful study.

Then, too, His relationship with His inner circle of disciples was very intimate and friendly. He lived, worshipped, and travelled with them.

He shared their failures and accomplishments. They were His constant companions even on occasions when He was a guest at social functions, weddings, banquets, and the like. Thus He could study the very springs of their actions, their fears, their sorrows, their joys, their motives, and their aspirations.

Because He knew His pupils so well, He was able to give them exactly such instruction as they personally needed and could particularly profit from. For example, to the housewife He spoke about lighting a lamp and sweeping the house to find a lost coin; to the farmer, about sowing the seed in the ground; to the shepherd, about finding the lost sheep; and to the fishermen, about becoming fishers of men. At times he deemed it appropriate to commend His disciples when, for instance, Peter, as spokesman of the twelve, gave the extraordinary confession: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." On the other hand, it was necessary, on occasion, to rebuke them severely, as He did when Peter tried to dissuade Him from risking His life by going to Jerusalem.

He had many pupils besides the twelve apostles. Each pupil was different from all the others; yet He had such wonderful insight into the nature of each one, that He was able to give him such instruction as perfectly fitted his particular needs and conditions. What a marvelous teacher He was!

So we, too, must know our pupils well if we

would be successful in teaching them. First of all, we ought to know and find out all we can about children in general, why they behave as they do. We ought to know something about the child's dominant urges, his springs of action; we ought to understand how children learn naturally and how their learning may be stimulated and guided in the best possible manner.

One way of learning these things is by attending teachers' meetings or institutes. Another way is to read books on the nature and development of children or to take a course in psychology. A very important way is to study the children themselves as one sees them in the community. If we have younger brothers or sisters in the family, we have a fine opportunity to study and discover the development of the child's mind and emotions, his soul life. The writer is the father of three children; and one of the most fascinating things for him is to watch their emotional, mental, and spiritual development while he plays with them or watches them in their play. The words of Luther occur to us in this connection: "If we are to train the children, we must become children with them." To do so will help us to understand them.

Not only ought the good teacher to study children in general, but he should make it a point to study each individual child in his class in order that he may accord each one the treatment that he needs. Jesus did not deal in terms of the mass,

or averages, or types, or abstractions; He dealt with the concrete needs of each individual.

No two children are alike. Each one is an individual soul; each one a separate and different personality. Each one has his own particular characteristics, problems, and needs that demand individual attention. Yet many teachers overlook this fact. We should not think much of a physician who would give every patient the same kind of treatment, regardless of his ailment. Teachers are, in a sense, spiritual physicians for their children; many, however, do not know their individual pupils sufficiently well to give them the kind of attention and treatment which they especially should have. An occasional visit to the homes of one's pupils would help a great deal in this respect. If we would emulate the Master Teacher on this point also, let us learn to know our pupils so well that we can give them collectively and individually just that kind of instruction which they need most, and by which they may develop best unto the stature of consecrated Christian manhod and womanhood.

We cannot dismiss the matter of the relationship of the Master to His pupils without mentioning His high regard, His love for them. Next to His love for His heavenly Father, Jesus' greatest love was for mankind. He loved His disciples, actual and potential, with an intensity that is beyond description. He was willing to forego comfort, sleep, and food, if need be, in order to lead a stray "sheep" back into His "fold." Yes,

we know that He finally laid down His very life for the sole purpose of bringing men into saving relationship with Himself. "Greater love hath no man than that He lay down his life for his friends."

His love was so great in its sweep that it encompassed all men, high and low, rich and poor —those who were honored and great among men as also "the least of these my brethren"—even the most shameful sinners.

And, oh, how patient, how kind, how considerate, how understanding this love for His pupils made Him!

Did Nicodemus show signs of cowardice by coming to Jesus under cover of darkness and did he break in upon His sleep and the sanctity of His privacy? There is no suggestion of resentment on the Master's part. Here was a rare teaching opportunity, and the Lord seized upon it. Even though this proud Rabbi of Israel found it so difficult to understand the spiritual nature of the kingdom, Jesus nevertheless instructed him with extreme patience.

Was the rich young ruler unwilling to forsake his wealth for the greater riches of God's kingdom? Jesus was sorry, for He loved the young man; yet He respected his personality and would not force him.

Were His disciples slow of mind and heart to understand the deep significance of His work and teaching? He dealt very patiently with them for months and years; He taught them over and

over again. If a man had "ears to hear" it was well; if not, He would try again.

Had a woman fallen so low as to prostitute her body in an adulterous life; had she been indignantly dragged before Him for "execution" by the "righteous" class of society? Jesus saw in her a soul worth saving. He did not forthwith pronounce harsh, thoughtless judgment upon her, but in love asked her to "sin no more" —and we have reason to believe that she was salvaged.

Did the Jews have "no dealings" with the despised Samaritans? By means of the request for a drink from the Samaritan woman[1] and by patient instruction, Jesus made it possible for her and her townsmen to drink of the water of everlasting life. Moreover, He forewent a refreshing drink and much-needed rest to do this.

Was the Master occupied with the fatiguing labor of teaching and healing the multitudes so that His disciples were led to rebuke the parents who brought their little children to receive His touch of blessing? Jesus was "much displeased" and characteristically said to them: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God!"

These are a few illustrations of the Lord's patient, considerate, and understanding love for His disciples. They reveal that He was willing to go to the greatest lengths, because He appreciated

[1] In the eyes of the Jews a defiling condescension!

the inestimable value and believed in the redeemableness of the human soul—of *each* soul. How it warms our hearts to behold this portrait of our Great Teacher! What an inspiration for us as teachers!

No further application needs to be made to our present-day situation than to say that all good teachers reflect to a high degree their Master's traits in respect to their relation to their pupils. It is just this matter of understandingly, patiently, sympathetically, and lovingly guiding the mental and spiritual growth of unique personalities which makes of teaching a most fascinating art! No other occupation is comparable to it.

Chapter III

His Thorough Knowledge of His Subject Matter

IN addition to Jesus' beautiful and intimate relationship to those whom He taught, He was the Incomparable Teacher also because, as we say in the language of the teacher, He knew His subject matter thoroughly. Subject matter is the material of instruction. It is all that which a teacher should impart to His pupils. For our purposes it is the complete will of God as revealed in the Bible.

And how thoroughly the Master knew what He was to teach! There was no hesitating, no stalling for time, no uncertainty, no useless words, no getting off the track, not a single mistake in His teaching. Always, in every situation and with every sort of pupil, He had a ready answer; and He always said the right thing at the right time and in the right way. As a result, every teaching situation found Him in complete control.

It is true that, as the only begotten Son of God, who from eternity was in the bosom of the Father, He alone could teach the wonderful thoughts of wisdom from the Father's heart; yet, as has been indicated before, He was also in the state of humiliation during His sojourn upon earth. And so it seems very likely that He did not arrive at the full measure of knowledge and

truth all at once. We can be sure that there was a gradual unfolding, a progressive understanding and revelation, even for Him, as is revealed by the words "the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom" and, later, "[the twelve-year-old] Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and Man." (Luke 2:40 and 52).

Since Joseph and Mary were God-fearing Jews, we can be certain they saw to it that their beloved boy, Jesus, was thoroughly instructed at home and also in the village synagogue school.[1] All pious Jewish parents made it a matter of real concern that their children be grounded in the Scriptures, according to the command of Moses: "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

From all indications Jesus must have been a very faithful student of the Scriptures, both as a boy and as a young man during the thirty years before He entered upon His public ministry. In the peaceful, secluded valley in which Nazareth is situated and in the silence of its surrounding hills, we can be assured that Jesus meditated and

[1] It is probable that such a school existed in Nazareth during Jesus' boyhood.

studied a great deal. He made good use of every opportunity afforded Him, and so we see Him, already as a twelve-year-old boy in the Temple, showing great zeal for His "Father's business" and surprising the learned doctors with His wise questions and answers. Yes, we know also that after He entered upon His public career, He spent much time in prolonged periods of meditation and prayer. For whole nights, for instance, He would commune in solitude on the mountain side with His heavenly Father.

It is further evident that His was a nature-loving soul, for He spent a great deal of time out-of-doors. He must have been a close student of nature. He knew and was at home among the hills and the mountains, the rivers and the trees, with the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. He studied men, too, and mingled freely with the multitudes.

Endowed with a natural alertness of mind and a profound interest in spiritual matters, He attained a firm grasp upon divine Truth and essential knowledge so that His faithfulness was rewarded by His having a perfect understanding of that which He taught to the people. His thorough familiarity with Old Testament Scriptures is clearly revealed by His many allusions to them and His numerous quotations from them. For instance, no matter into what difficult position His enemies tried to get Him, whether it was the temptation of Satan at the beginning of His ministry or, later, the traps of the scribes and Phari-

sees, He could always deftly wield the sword of the Spirit and silence His enemies by means of telling quotations from Scripture. His profound knowledge of man and of nature is evidenced by His numerous illustrations taken from human relationships and natural phenomena. Incidentally, these illustrations represent the acme of clarity and beauty.

May we be permitted to ask a few straightforward questions here. How do we who are teachers of religion, Sunday school teachers, particularly, compare with the Master in the matter of knowing our subject matter? How well do we know our Bibles and the fundamental teachings of the Church? How much do we know about nature and man? Are we fully prepared when we get up before our classes? Or is our lesson a disappointment to the bright-eyed, eager boys and girls entrusted to us? Do we start early to prepare for our teaching, so that we have sufficient time to meditate prayerfully on the lesson and gain information from our Bibles and also from various other helpful sources? Or do we merely read the lesson over hurriedly just before Sunday School takes up? Merely reading over the lesson is not preparation. No wonder many teachers run out of material five minutes or so before the bell rings. No wonder Sunday School teaching is often perfunctory and lifeless, with the result that the children are listless and learn little.

As Christian teachers we have a solemn obli-

gation to our beloved Savior and to our boys and girls. We are to "feed" the precious "lambs" of Christ. What a glorious path of opportunity the Master thereby opens up to us! With His help let us prepare ourselves so well, that we can give our children the bread and water of Life rather than the husks of negligence. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15).

May the Master be our ideal in this respect. Much of the joy in teaching comes from having a thorough grasp of what we are to teach.

Chapter IV

His Marvelous Methods of Teaching

WE come to the next important characteristic which stamps Jesus as the Master Teacher, namely, the amazingly skillful methods which He used in His teaching. Method, as we know, represents the *how* of teaching, the manner in which it is done. And in this regard also, Jesus is the model for all Christian teachers.

In certain respects modern education has, indeed, made real advances over the practice of teachers in previous periods; but when we study it in the light of the pedagogy of Jesus (usually overlooked by moderns), we find that present-day education has merely given new names for some very old methods of teaching. In many ways we are forced to the conclusion that the methods which Jesus used have never been excelled—they have not even been equalled. Our problem is not that of improving on Jesus' methods but of catching up with Him.

Strange as it may seem, there are some well-meaning people even today who think of methods of teaching as something that is of little importance. Perhaps, as a result, we have some teachers in the Sunday School who believe they are teaching when they have their pupils read the

lesson and merely punctuate this uninteresting procedure by equally uninteresting and perfunctory questions. Others have their pupils memorize the lesson and "recite" it and perhaps, as part of the recitation, they even read off verbatim the prepared questions (usually furnished only as a guide) at the end of the lesson. And then they show alarm at modern youth for not being more interested in the Word of God! It would appear that in such a situation neither the teacher nor the pupils can find pleasure in their work. Surely, the pupils get little benefit from such a procedure. Such practice can hardly be called teaching. "Lesson hearing" is doubtless the more appropriate name for it.

Perhaps we have in this lack of emphasis on good methods one of the reasons why the effectiveness of the work of the Sunday School has in recent years been severely criticised in secular educational circles. We are convinced that if we follow the methods of the Great Teacher, our work will be very much more effective than it is. Space does not permit us, however, to explain and illustrate all of Jesus' wonderful methods; in this brief treatise we can do little more than merely call attention to some of the most important features of them.

HE USED A VARIETY OF METHODS

In general, we might say that one reason for Jesus' marvelous success as a teacher was His use of *a variety of excellent methods.* He did not

confine Himself to the use of one and the same method, as some teachers do, but He varied His methods as occasion demanded. He adapted His methods to the character of His specific aim and of His subject matter, and to the special needs of His pupils. As a result, His manner of teaching was not monotonous; there was a perennial freshness about it. He always held the interest and attention of His pupils. For instance, Jesus' frequent use of parables, metaphors, similes, object lessons, maxims, questions, and paradoxes not only served to make His teaching interesting, but also helped to make it clear and aided Him to drive home important truths.

HIS PARABLES

The manner in which Jesus used the *parable* showed that He was a master in the art of illustration. The word parable signifies a "comparison," or, more particularly, as we read in Hastings' Bible Dictionary, parables are "scenes or short stories taken from nature or from common life, which present in a picturesque and vivid way some leading thought or principle which is capable of being transformed to the higher spiritual life of man."[1] The parables of Jesus are pre-eminent because of their number,[2] their variety, their appropriateness, their simplicity, and their beauty. How simply, yet how vividly and

[1] Vol. 2, p. 617.

[2] At least 46 are recorded in the Gospels.

grippingly, at times, He told His stories. How concrete and to the point they were. How clear they made the divine truth for His pupils.

There is the matchless, poignant parable of the Prodigal Son[3] to illustrate God's forgiving grace and love; the simple, but effective, parable of the Sower whose seed falls on different kinds of ground to show how God's Word is received in different hearts; the dramatic story of the Good Samaritan to reveal that our neighbor is anyone who is in need of our help. When Jesus wished to illustrate how the Kingdom of God develops quietly and gradually, yet surely and effectively, from a small beginning, He likened it to a tiny mustard seed which grows into "a tree so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof," or to a piece of leaven which finally leavens the whole lump. When He wanted His pupils to realize the inestimable importance and value of the Kingdom of God, He compared it to the "treasure hidden in the field" or to the "pearl of great price" which a man is so anxious to purchase that he converts all his property into sufficient money for this purpose. These are of course, merely a few samples.

HIS OBJECT LESSONS

Not only did Jesus have a remarkable facility for bringing His ideas home to His disciples in a concrete way by means of verbal illustrations,

[3] It has been called "the greatest short story ever written."

but He also knew how to do it very effectively by the use of what we today call "*object lessons.*" How realistic and compelling these lessons were.

Forcefully He emphasized the sanctity of the temple by driving out the money changers and those who sold animals. Effectively He taught the necessity of civil obedience by quietly paying the tax. To Peter He said: "Thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for thee and me." When, on a certain occasion, His disciples disputed among themselves as to who should be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven and He saw the need of giving them a lesson in humility, He quietly took a little child and placed him in the midst of them and said unto them: "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven." This lesson must have had a real effect upon the Lord's disciples; but they evidently needed further instruction in humble service and so, near the end of His ministry, "He riseth from supper and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He . . . began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded." They never forgot *this* lesson!

HIS QUESTIONS

The ability to use good *questions* is generally recognized as characteristic of a good teacher. The importance of mastering the art of question-

ing is apparent when we call attention to the fact that the question lies at the basis of practically all teaching techniques, with the possible exception of the telling method. And we know that it may be advisable to intersperse even a story or a "lecture" with an occasional question to get or hold attention.

Although Socrates used the question as a means of instruction a few hundred years before Christ, we are convinced, from a comparison of their respective methods, that he was excelled by Christ in the fine art of questioning.

In brief, permit us to say that Jesus' questions were never ambiguous, but were always clearly worded and to the point. His pupils always knew what He was driving at. Moreover, His questions invariably aroused interest and attention. They stimulated and guided the thinking of His pupils.

One day the disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus and asked: "Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?" Jesus must have deeply stirred their thinking about the essence of the Kingdom by countering: "Can the sons of the bride chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast." Another illustration of a thought-provoking question which went to the very bottom of man's relationship to Christ, is this one: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his

own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" A question, indeed, worthy of a life-time of thought!

His questions were so challenging and compelling at times that even His enemies were either forced to draw the right conclusion, or they did not dare to answer lest they appear ridiculous in the eyes of the people standing near. Following are two examples addressed to the critical, religious leaders of the Jews: "The baptism of John, whence was it, from heaven, or of men?" And "Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life or to kill?"

It should be added that Jesus encouraged questions on the part of His pupils, also, and never failed to answer their honest inquiries. No sincere seeker after truth left the great Teacher disappointed, but cynical question, like the one asked by the vacillating Pilate, "What is truth?" went unheeded. To be sure, He did not invariably answer His pupils' questions directly, but always in such a manner as to meet the deepest need of their souls. This was ever uppermost in His mind.

HIS USE OF APPERCEPTION

From the illustrations we have thus far given, you have perhaps noticed another important feature of the Master's method. It is this: whenever He taught a new truth, He alwas found a *point of contact* with His hearers. He did not do

as some do today, who are not acquainted with how the mind grasps new ideas, namely, try to teach an abstract truth with many verbal explanations and definitions. Such a procedure is often in vain. Many beginning teachers do not fully realize the importance of the principle of *apperception* which operates here. We simply cannot understand a new idea unless it may, in some way, be related to our previous experience. The new is always interpreted in terms of the related old knowledge.

Let us illustrate that we do not merely perceive mentally, but that we always *ap*-perceive. One day a class of children was asked to define "justice." A girl raised her hand and said: "Justice, that's the courthouse over there." In some way the dispensing of justice had become intimately associated in her mind with the courthouse. A lad, when asked what justice meant to him, said, "Justice, why, that means getting a whipping!" Some adult, perhaps, with a stick in his hand had on a previous occasion said to him, "Johnny, come here. I'll give you justice!" We always interpret the new in terms of the related old knowledge—and in no other way.

This explains also why a teacher, after having carefully taught the same idea to a group of pupils, is often disappointed when he receives so many diverse and often contradictory answers from his pupils. Each one of them has interpreted the same thought in terms of *his* particular background of experience. The result is a different

product in each little mind. Thus, a faulty apperceptive background results in faulty understanding; no apperceptive background results in no understanding.

Jesus, therefore, did not try to teach abstract truths "out of the blue," as it were, but always He led His pupils from the known to the unknown, from the concrete to the abstract. The parables, some of which have previously been cited, demonstrate this. By means of these stories which reached into and reflected some phase of their everyday experiences He led them the more easily to understand new elements of sacred truth. His use of similes and metaphors accomplished the same results.

For the purpose of illustrating the Master's skillful adherence to the principle of apperception, we have space for just one or two additional examples. When he wished to emphasize the spiritual danger and impediment of riches, He said to His disciples, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."[1] When it became necessary to teach the disciples of John the true nature of His Kingdom and the thorough newness of its principles as contrasted with

[1] It is said that a certain very narrow gate in the wall of Jerusalem was called "The Needle's Eye." If this be true, then the point which Jesus wished to make must at once have been clear to His disciples: a camel's bulky baggage, strapped on either side, would serve as an impediment to hinder him from squeezing through this narrow aperture.

the notions in vogue, He used this telling illustration: "No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles (wine skins): else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved."

HIS VITALIZED TEACHING

We have heard a great deal in modern education about "pupil-centered" teaching. More recently the emphasis has been on "experience-centered" and "life-centered" instruction. All of these expressions represent, more or less, different phases of the same kind of teaching—the kind that takes into consideration the every day experiences, the interests, the special problems and needs of the pupil, namely, *vitalized* teaching.

Personally, we believe in vitalized teaching, rightly understood; however, we are ready to say that some proponents of these modern ideas have gone to extremes and have made fads of them by catering to the whims of pupils and by neglecting the subject matter to be taught. The astonishing but simple fact of the matter is that Jesus anticipated our best modern educators 1900 years ago without, of course, using their labels or permitting His methods to degenerate

into defenseless fads. His teaching was truly "vitalized" in the best sense of the term.

The underlying idea represented by the expression is opposed to what is frequently termed the "cold-storage" method of teaching—in a more or less formal way attempting to impart facts to pupils which they are to store away in their minds for future use. That emphasizes subject matter to the neglect of the personalities taught. Entirely too much of our present day teaching is of this sort.

Vitalized teaching, as we think of it, gives both the pupil and the significant subject matter due emphasis. It grows out of, or at least connects up with, the pupils' real life-situations and problems. It takes cognizance also of their present interests and needs as well as of their future needs. It is to be continued on a plane intellectually meaningful to the pupils, so that it may result not merely in facts stored up in their minds, but in actual changes in their personalities. Such changes consist of new insights, stronger faith, higher ideals, better habits, and so forth.[1]

When we observe the Master at work, we notice that He usually "struck while the iron was hot." He endeavored to lead His pupils, if possible, to a consciousness of their needs and then

[1] In this whole discussion we must not lose sight of the fact that the Holy Spirit is constantly operative in the Word of God and can produce results even though the teacher is crude in his methods, but who will deny that the employment of good, psychological methods will bring better results?

He taught them what they *needed*, *when* and *as* they needed it. This is significant teaching; this is vitalized teaching in the truest sense.

Some of the examples of Jesus' methods already alluded to, including His matchless parables, well represent this principle; but perhaps one or two additional illustrations will not be out of place. For instance, He admonished the materially-minded multitude, whom He had on the previous day miraculously fed with a few loaves and fishes (the "life-situation" of tremendous importance to them) to "labor not for the meat which perisheth but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." He, moreover, emphasized the fact that it was necessary for them to eat of His flesh and drink of His blood if they would have such life eternal. Consequently, many turned away from Him because they considered His message a "hard saying." But think of the strengthening effect His words had on those few who, in answer to His question, "Will ye also go away?" could trustfully answer with Simon Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God!" The immediate change in their personalities consisted of the strengthening of their faith in Him and the tightening of their hold on that life which endures forever.

One day Jesus and His disciples were on their way from Judea to Galilee. At noon, tired, hungry, and thirsty from His journey, Jesus sat

down at Jacob's well near the city called Sychar. The disciples had gone into the city to buy food. When a Samaritan woman came from the city to draw water, Jesus asked her for a drink. This question in connection with the daily necessity of her coming out of the city to carry water for her personal and household needs furnished the vital "life-situation" from which the Great Teacher by means of masterly steps gradually led her to seek and, actually, to find in Him the water of eternal life. Through this incident many of her townsmen also were led to accept Him as their Savior. It is difficult to find an instance of more effective or "vitalized" teaching than this.

HIS USE OF THE PROBLEM

A further scanning of the methods of the Master Teacher shows that He frequently made use of the *problem* in His teaching. Here He was also fully abreast of modern methods. A stimulating problem challenges the thinking of pupils. The use of the problem is more effective than just ladling out the information, especially if the pupils can be led to find the solution themselves.

The problem of the proper observance of the Sabbath, for example, was made acute by the continual accusations from the Pharisees that Jesus habitually broke the Sabbath regulations. It does not appear that He specifically solved this problem for His disciples; but by the general principles He laid down as, for instance, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sab-

bath," and by His deeds of love on this day, they were to work out the correct solution themselves.

At the behest of Herod, John the Baptist had lingered long in prison. Apparently Jesus was not doing anything about it. Perplexed and possibly overcome by doubt, John sent two of his disciples to Jesus to ask Him, "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" Jesus could easily have said, "Yes, tell John that I am He," and this would have settled the matter; but He was too great a teacher for that. It was much better for John to do his own thinking and draw his own conclusions. Notice Jesus' remarkable answer: "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me."

HIS APPEAL TO THE EMOTIONS AND THE WILL

The great teachers of ancient Greece, Socrates and Plato, were content when their pupils had gained clear ideas. "Knowledge is virtue," they said. If a man knew what was right, they thought he would surely do the right. Jesus, however, having a more perfect knowledge of man, strove to effect not only knowledge but especially faith, love, noble living. He was a teacher of human

souls, not of human intellects. He knew that the soul was cultured only when there was faith and all the fruits thereof—when the will was moved to do the right. And so He *appealed to* the deepest springs of *man's emotions and endeavored to bend his will* into the path of righteousness.

Note, for instance, the appeal in the following words: "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love." "Love one another, as I have loved you." "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love." "Love your enemies, bless them . . . , do good to them . . . , and pray for them." "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." "Be not afraid, only believe." "If any man willeth to do his [God's] will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." "Let your light . . . shine before men." "If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them." "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord; . . . but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." Consider also many expressions like these: "Go"; "Go and tell"; "Come"; "Abide"; "Follow me"; "Preach"; "Teach"; "Make disciples"; "Ask"; "Offer the gift"; "Lend"; "Do likewise"; "Feed my sheep"; "Turn the other cheek"; and many others.

While Jesus did use some prohibitions when necessary, it is well for us teachers to note also, in passing, that in the preceding paragraph every

appeal and command is in positive form. Jesus realized that the positive inspires rather than the negative. He wished not only to keep His disciples from evil but especially to follow a God-pleasing program of living. He wanted them not merely to be good but to be good for something in His kingdom.

HIS ENCOURAGEMENT OF PARTICIPATION

Much more could, of course, be told of Jesus' marvelous methods, but, in order that our consideration of the Master's manner of teaching may not become too drawn out, we shall make only one more point in this connection. We shall close this chapter with a reference to the fact that Jesus' teaching was in high degree effective, also, because He encouraged what we call *participation* on the part of His pupils. Not only did He teach them and tell them what to do, but He also led them to put their learning into practice. "No impression without expression" is an old but very good pedagogical maxim. "We learn to do by doing" is the modern counterpart. The child, for instance, learns to pray, not so much by a great deal of instruction about prayer, as he does by actually practicing a prayer life under guidance. He learns to know his Bible not so much by learning a great deal about the Bible as by getting the habit of systematic reading of the Good Book itself under the leadership of an understanding teacher.

It appears that Jesus performed only such work as His disciples were not able to do. We know they assisted Him in many ways. Early in His ministry He let them do the work of baptizing new converts (John 4:2).

At the occasion of the feeding of the five thousand in the desert place, through the immediate ministration of the disciples Jesus had the multitude sit down "by companies" upon the grass. Through them, also, He distributed the loaves and fishes among the people. Similarly the disciples assisted the Master again at the feeding of the four thousand.

In Matthew 10:5 and the following verses we see Him sending out the twelve into all the cities of the land (excepting those of the Samaritans and of "the way of the Gentiles") to preach that "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." In charging them to go He used astonishing words. Read them. Later, He sent out the seventy (Luke 10:1-16) with a similar commission. To be sure, in both instances He gave them instructions to help them in their ministry, but the details He left to them to work out in the manner best determined by the immediate situations. It is recorded that the seventy returned with a joyful account of their success saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name!"

Yes, His methods were marvelous indeed and eminently effective. Only eternity can measure the results of His work! If we follow in the foot-

steps of the Master also in the manner in which He taught, we cannot go wrong. To do so will not only produce happy results but also make our teaching a truly fine art. May Jesus be our Inspiration and Guide, also in this regard.

Chapter V

His Dynamic Personality

ALTHOUGH a thorough knowledge of subject matter and the use of good methods are a very necessary part of the equipment of a teacher, we are convinced that the most important asset is the right kind of personality. Jesus had a truly dynamic personality, and it is perhaps not too much to say that this fact, more than any other, made Him the one Incomparable Teacher of all the ages.

Certain pious artists have painted portraits of the Master as they visualized Him in the innermost recesses of their souls. We must admit that some of these pictures arrest our attention and cause us to ponder prayerfully before them. Yet, somehow or other, we believe that the usual manner of representing Him as a pale and frail man is not in harmony with what He really looked like. We must admit, of course, that nowhere in the New Testament do we have an actual description of Jesus' outward appearance. In spite of this, however, we have every reason to believe that in physical appearance Jesus was singularly attractive. He was an out-of-doors man and must have radiated the charm of ruddy health and the magnetism of virile strength. Otherwise He could not have endured all the

taxing labor and the privations through which He went.

We may well imagine that His voice was clear, full, vigorous, impressive, and inviting. Occasionally we are struck today by an unusually charming, sonorous radio voice. There must have been something singular in the tonal quality of the Master's voice, as well as in His other traits, which caused Matthew forthwith to abandon his lucrative business when Jesus said, "Follow Me!" It was a voice which Mary could not forget. When, at the sepulchre, she heard the Master call, "Mary!" she recognized Him at once. She immediately turned and said, "Rabboni, which is to say, Master!" All of Jesus' discourses must have had an element of fascination, the charm of eloquence.

In considering the personality of Jesus, we shall, however, view it in its broadest and deepest sense. We have reference to everything that was characteristic of Him, particularly the beauty of His inner soul and the majesty of His character as it manifested itself in His activities and illumined His whole being.

The first thing that strikes us is His utter sinlessness, His absolute purity. The son of Man "did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." In spite of the importunity of the chief priests and the rabble, Pilate, after examining Jesus, was compelled to announce that he found "no fault in Him." The governor's wife, because of a dream, entreated him to have "noth-

ing to do with that just man." Jesus' enemies, who would only have been too glad to do so, could not convict Him of a single sin.

"Fair is the sunshine,
Fairer the moonlight
And the sparkling stars on high;
Jesus shines brighter,
Jesus shines purer,
Than all the angels in the sky."

We have previously called attention to the fact that He was in perfect control of every situation, no matter what it was. There was a convincing calm, a serenity, a poise, a definite note of assurance about Him which radiated authority. This was doubtlessly caused, in part, by His purity, by the fact that He was at peace with Himself and with His Father, and also by the conviction of the absolute truth and the urgent necessity of His message and mission. No wonder it was said that the people heard Him gladly and "hung on His words, listening"; that "He taught . . . as one having authority and not as the scribes." Little wonder that the rough soldiers, sent to arrest Him, could not withstand the impact of His personality and had to report back to the fuming Pharisees, "Never man spake like this man!" Even the hard, cynical Pilate was awed and felt ill at ease in the presence of the silent power and grandeur of His prisoner. The multitude who came with swords and staves to take Him in Gethsemane impotently fell backward to the ground when He revealed Himself

to them as the One whom they sought by calmly saying, "I am He!"

Although it may seem contradictory to what has just been said, Jesus' whole personality radiated a characteristic gentleness and tenderness. Children were naturally attracted to Him. We like to think of the children in the villages on His usual itinerary running toward Him with a joyful welcome and clambering up on His lap when He sat down to rest. We know that He was wont to take them into His arms, caress them, and bless them. He was a sympathetic friend to people of all ages, especially to those who were in unfortunate circumstances. "When He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." He did all He could to relieve their suffering and pain. His sympathetic heart is revealed by His tears shed at the tomb of His dear friend Lazarus and also over the coming doom of His beloved Jerusalem. What exquisite tenderness and thoughtful devotion was shown on Golgatha when in the midst of unspeakable suffering He made provision for the care of His mother!

A great soul is ever humble and generous. Though He was Lord of all, He mingled freely with the common people. He humbly did His disciples a menial service by washing their feet. His nature was utterly devoid of all selfseeking. He never used His power and authority for selfish ends—never to enhance His own ease and

comfort, although He could easily have done so. Jesus "went about doing good." He "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give His life a ransom for many." "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes, He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." The greatest token of His generous, forgiving soul we have in the outstanding instance on the cross, when in the agony of His dying hour He prayed for His enemies who had brought about His crucifixion, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do!"

The dynamic element in the Master's personality is probably to be accounted for, in large part, by His burning zeal for His Father's honor and glory. Human tongue cannot describe nor mind fathom the intensity of His holy love. More important than anything else during His career on earth was the doing of His Father's will and the glorification of His name. On two occasions, once at the beginning and once near the end of His ministry, we see His zeal for His Father's house flashing forth in righteous wrath when He drove the money changers and those who sold animals from the temple. "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. And His disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."

Not only was He full of zeal and love for His Father in heaven, but, as already indicated, His

great soul was also filled with a consuming passion for the souls of men. No effort, no service, no sacrifice in their behalf did He consider too great. He loved sinful mankind so much that He came into the world for the express purpose of giving His life in order that men might have abundant life. Such is "love divine, all love excelling!" John, the apostle of love, gives us a glimpse of Jesus' tender devotion to His disciples when he quotes Him as saying: "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you."

An element in the personality of Jesus which should not be overlooked was His joyousness. Goodspeed translates Luke 10:21 by "At that moment He was inspired with joy." When one looks for them, one is surprised at the numerous Scripture passages which refer to the joyfulness of the Master. He told His disciples, "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." In His high-priestly prayer, just before His betrayal and ignominious death, He was able to pray "that they (His disciples) might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." His personality was undoubtedly the opposite from that of the austere ascetic, John the Baptist. The latter's disciples came to Jesus and, doubtless with a note of complaint, asked Him why His disciples did not fast as did they and the Pharisees. Jesus' cheerfulness and spiritual buoyancy is evidenced by the fact, also, that He gladly graced a number of social functions, as, for instance, the wedding at

Cana, dinner engagements, and the like. The disciples must have liked to be with their Master by sheer reason of His cheerful, joyous companionship.

The greatest thing that can be said about any teacher is that He practices what He teaches. We know that the effect of otherwise splendid teaching is often undermined by the fact that a teacher's life denies what he professes. When we look at the Master, however, we marvel at His utter sincerity. Only of Him can it be said, He literally lived what He taught. He never stooped to compromise principle or truth for the sake of personal gain. The Pharisees were looking for an earthly deliverer of the people and might have been won over as powerful allies if He had not exposed their hypocrisy. He might have had the rich young ruler as a helpful companion and friend, and He thought a great deal of him, too; but He loved truth better than personal advantage and so lost this otherwise lovable young man. Neither would He yield to the importunities of the multitude who were intent upon making Him their earthly king. What an opportunity for personal power and aggrandizement was here thrown into His lap! He preferred, however, to tread the path of loneliness, rejection, pain, and finally—death, for the sake of the great cause in which He had enlisted. But, as a result, He was able to lead men into the fullness of life. God grant us teachers more of the singleness of purpose of Jesus!

Chapter VI

His Definite and Lofty Aim

FINALLY, another important reason why Jesus was the Great Teacher was the fact that He had a clear and lofty aim which He ever kept before Him. Every intelligent person who undertakes an important task in life has an aim, or objective, which he wishes to accomplish. It is very important to have a definite aim in our work. Such an aim makes our work more interesting; it furnishes a reason or motive to work and to keep on working until we have accomplished what we have set out to do. An aim, therefore, makes our work meaningful and zestful. This is true especially if our objective is a worthy one and if each day we may discover some progress toward it.

Two men are building a wall. A third man comes along and asks one of them, "What are you doing?" He answers, "Can't you see? I am laying brick." When the other workman is asked what he is doing, he raises his hand aloft and quickly replies, "I? Why, I am building a *cathedral*!" One is just laying brick; the other is laying brick too, but while he lays each brick he is envisaging the beautiful house of worship which is gradually taking form. Other things equal, which of these two men, do you think, is getting more out of his work and is putting more into it?

An aim, if it is clear cut, also helps to avoid random activity, "lost motion," as we say, and thus serves to make our work more effective. In the light of our aim we avoid such activities as do not help us to accomplish our task, or which might be a hindrance, and we choose such means as do serve our purpose in the quickest and best possible manner.

To return to the illustration just given. Suppose the workmen are hired merely to put up a building. That is at least something of an aim. But suppose neither of them knows exactly what kind of building is to be erected or how large it is to be. There is no sketch of it; there are no plans nor blueprints. They start building. What will be the result? Nobody knows. They do not know either, until they have finished. Even if they succeed in putting up some kind of structure that might be fairly satisfactory—and this would be extremely doubtful—how much effort, how much time and material, do you think, they will have wasted in the process? You see, therefore, that it is indeed very important to have a clear cut aim in our work. This is especially true of teaching, because it involves not perishable material but personalities—immortal, priceless souls.

The Master's aim was as definite as it was lofty. Jesus came into this sin-sick world for one sublime purpose. Never did He swerve from it either to the right or to the left. Neither personal comfort nor advantage, neither the wily tempta-

tions of the Evil One nor the sincere but misdirected entreaties of His friends could induce Him to divert a hair's breadth from such purpose. Cost what it might, the Master resolutely set His face toward His task and left no stone unturned to carry it out successfully. For all of this we thank God.

We may distinguish between the purpose of His "work" and that of His "teaching." With respect to the former, His great purpose in coming into the world, as He Himself said, was "not to be ministered unto but to minister and give His life a ransom for many." "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." He came as "the Lamb of God" to take away the sin of the world through His sacrificial suffering and death on the cross. He gave His life in order that we and all men might have abundant life. We might sum this all up by saying that His work consisted in establishing "the Kingdom of God" upon earth.

His main purpose in teaching was to inform people about this Kingdom, or to reveal the good and gracious will of His heavenly Father who "so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life." He revealed Himself to men as their Messiah, promised of old, as "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" that only through faith in Him can men come to the Father and have life. This faith He taught as the essential for membership in the Kingdom of

God. He told His disciples many other things, of course, which they needed to know, but His essential aim was effectively to show men how they might become members of this glorious Kingdom. Surely, we can think of no higher aim than this. Jesus' every thought, His every word, and His every act was directed toward this lofty goal.

Such was the main, or the ultimate, aim of His teaching. But it is evident that He also had immediate aims which varied with every teaching situation—with the varying needs of His pupils. These immediate objectives were, however, only phases of the large aim, namely, to bring souls into the Kingdom.

On certain occasions, for instance, when men had erroneous views of the nature of His Kingdom, He had to correct them and show that this Kingdom is essentially spiritual, "is not of this world," "cometh not with observation," "is within you." Or, it was necessary to instruct His hearers concerning the conditions of entrance, "repent ye, and believe the gospel," "if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Again, it was at times necessary to teach that certain traits, such as humility, mercifulness, purity, peacefulness, and joyfulness, for instance, are the proper adornments of the inhabitants of this Kingdom. Then, too, His disciples must keep in mind, for their comfort, the Kingdom's glorious consummation, "and then shall they see the Son of man

coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these things begin to come to pass, look up, and lift up your heads; because your redemption draweth nigh." In short, the Master Teacher worked for that which He saw each teaching situation required, in order that the main aim might be fully accomplished in His pupils.

How many teachers of religion, how many teachers in our Sunday schools, particularly, have a clearly conceived aim in mind? For our purpose the apostle Paul expresses the aim of religious instruction in his second epistle to Timothy: "That from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (II Tim. 3, 15-17).

As Timothy's pious mother and grandmother instructed him during his childhood in the holy Scriptures, so should we, parents and teachers, teach our children God's precious Word in order, first, to make them wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ their Savior, and, secondly, to instruct or train them in righteousness, to furnish them completely for every good work; in other words, through our teaching we are to help our boys and girls to become good Christians in

word and deed. This is merely another way of saying that we are to make of them good citizens in the Kingdom of God. In order that this high purpose may be accomplished, the children must, of course, *know* the Scriptures. The knowledge of the Scriptures is the direct means which the Holy Spirit uses to achieve the goal.

We teachers of Christianity are thus called to be the special instruments of God and co-laborers of Christ in building up and extending His Kingdom of Grace. As did Jesus, so let us ever keep this great goal before our eyes. It will help to make our work more successful and will lend zest and joy to our efforts. No teacher in the secular schools can possibly have a goal quite so sublime. Then, too, we do not wish to lose sight of the fact that each lesson has its particlar aim or aims for which we are to work. The aggregate of such aims will achieve the great aim just described. Christian teachers, is it not a *rare privilege* to be an instructor of children and youth? Let us thank God for it, if this privilege be ours!

CONCLUSION

And thus we have come to the end of our brief study of the Master Teacher. We have seen that teaching was His chief method of labor and that He was extremely successful in this activity. We have had opportunity to consider the most essential traits which made Him the One Great, Peerless Teacher of all the ages. We have been warmed by His intimate and beautiful relation to His pupils. We have been impressed with His profound knowledge of what He taught. We have marveled at the effective artistry of His methods. We have been touched and attracted by the charm of his dynamic personality. And, finally, we have noted His definite and sublime aim in His work.

We pray that our little session at the feet of the Master may have been profitable, at least to some extent. May we rise up and go forth with a renewed vision of the greatness and glory of the work He has given us to do. May He also be our Inspiration and Guide in the performance of our task, so that, hand in hand with our children, we may grow "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

And this one word of encouragement. By prayerful study, by careful practice, and by the help of His Holy Spirit, we may approach our beloved Lord in all essential respects. What a glorious prospect for such as are in earnest about

their God-given task! And surely, our work, the consequences of which reach into all eternity, is worth every effort and sacrifice necessary for its improvement.

"Jesus, our Master, make us more like Thee! Amen."